

THE CLOATHIERS

ANSWERS *to*, and REASONS *against*

THE Hamburgh-Company.

WHEREAS a certain Printed Paper, entituled, *An Humble Representation of the State of our Woollen-Manufacture*, has been industriously handed about, in favour of the *Hamburgh-Company*; we shall, in the first place, most readily concur with the Representer, in the following Proposals, (*viz.*)

- I. *That the most effectual Means be taken to prevent the Exportation of Wooll.*
- II. *That the Price of the Workmanship of the Poor be kept up.*
- III. *That 'tis necessary we have all possible Advantages of Dying Materials, so that our Goods may be Exported more fully Manufactured.*
- IV. *That the Measures for Cloth may be duly Regulated, and the Goodness of our Manufactures kept to a certain Standard.*
- V. *That the Wooll-Broggers be suppress'd, and the Market at Blackwell-Hall brought to a due Regulation.*
- VI. *That the Aulnage is become Oppressive, and very Vexatious.*

These, and all other wholsom Regulations of the like nature, we desire may be establish'd as the Wisdom of the Parliament shall think meet. But (with Submission) if the Exportation of our Woollen-Manufacture be not Free, and the same render'd as cheap as possible to Foreign Markets, all our Regulations will fail in their effect. Now the *Hamburgh-Company* has been the Cause of rendring our Manufactures dear to Foreign Markets, (as we shall immediately prove) and yet these are the Men for whom the Representer so earnestly pleads, under the Name of the *Merchant-Adventurers of England*; and therefore we suspect his Design is to prejudice our Trade, or that he has no Design at all; For he forgets himself, and the Cause he pleads, when he says, *The having but one Seller of Alum, savours of a Monoply*, and so justly speaks against Monopolies: And so do we, and therefore against the *Hamburgh-Company*, because that has been, and would be (if encouraged) the greatest Monoply that has been known.

Whilst the Trade was limited to the *Hamburgh Company* only, there were several Woollen-Manufactures actually set up at *Liege, Viviers, Cologne, Silesia, &c.* which, during the time of a

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We now proceed to give our REASONS against the present, or any other *Hamburgh-Company*.

A *Hamburgh-Company* is the most unnecessary of any Company yet known; for that *Hamburgh* is so near Home, and has been always so much at *England's* devotion, that that Trade may be easily managed without being at the Charge of a *Hamburgh-Company*, and therefore the Charge to support the Company is altogether needless. And though it may be said, That the Company raiseth that Charge amongst themselves; yet 'tis evident, that their Members must have it again out of our Manufactures, so they will be sold the dearer at Foreign Markets, which will very much prejudice the Cloathing Trade here, and occasion the erecting again of other Manufacturies Abroad. And whereas the Company so much extoll their Privileges and Immunities, which they pretend to have both at Home and Abroad; we know of none they have at Home but this, (*viz.*) That one not Free of that Company, pays, by virtue of a Patent granted by King *Charles II.* to a certain Dutcheß, for a long Western Cloth White, upon Exportation, 5 s. per Cloth; whereas one that is Free pays but 1 s. 4 d. per Cloth, over and above the King's Duty: Which looks rather like a Discouragement to our Manufacture, than
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a due Immunity of the *Hamburgh-Company*. And as to their Privileges and Immunities Abroad, whatever they be, they are such as will not countervail the Charges they must raise amongst themselves, and by this they render our Manufactures still dearer to Foreign Markets.

But we presume, no body does grudge or envy them for their Immunities; they may sit quiet in the enjoyment of them. If we have but a Free Trade, we are contented: And (with Submission) a Free Trade in our Woollen-Manufacture is what *England* is chiefly to consider, and not those trifling and petty Immunities of the *Hamburgh-Company* Abroad, from which *England* reaps no Benefit.

Experience has shewn, That a Free and Unrestrained Trade is most beneficial to our Woollen-Manufactures: For in the three succeeding Years after Passing the Act 1 *W. M. for a Free Trade*, there was bought, and actually Exported (though in a time of War) to *Holland, Flanders, Brabant* and *Germany*, of our Woollen-Manufactures, to the value of 400000 *l.* and upwards, from the Port of *London* only, more than was Exported in the three Years preceeding the said Act, when the Trade was limited to the *Hamburgh-Company* only; as may appear by the Entries in the *Custom-House* Books, relation being had thereunto.

III. A limited Sett of Men will buy but when they please; but when the Trade is Free, there will be constant Buyings. Experience has evidenced this: For when the Trade was confin'd to the *Hamburgh-Company*, they allow'd but two Exportations in the Year, to the end the wealthy Merchants might make their advantage of the poorer sort of Cloathiers, who not having sufficient Stocks to keep their Goods from one time of shipping to another, were often necessitated to sell for great Loss, to the Ruine of their Families, and many Poor which they employ'd. But since the Trade has been Free, the number of Buyers are much encreased, and thereby our Manufactures constantly in good demand; every Cloathier exposing his Cloth to Sale in the Market, may every Week have several Chapmen, and sell for Ready-Money, and at better Prices than were ever known when the Trade was confin'd to the *Hamburgh-Company* only. And a Free Trade is evidently the chief, if not the only Reason, that Wooll has yielded such good Prices for many Years past, having generally sold for above one Third part more than it did when the Trade was limited as aforesaid. And since a Free Trade has been granted, all the Chief Trading Towns in *Germany* have been so plentifully supplied with our Manufactures at the best hand, that the Foreign Woollen-Manufactures have been much discouraged, and the wearing of ours, grows daily more in esteem.

IV. The *Germans* never could nor would be prevail'd upon (notwithstanding the pretended stockt Ware-houses of the *Hamburgh-Company* at *Hamburgh*) to make some hundred Miles Journeys thither to buy our Manufactures, but would be provided, from time to time, according to their own Patterns, from *England*, especially when thus they could have them above 10 per Cent. cheaper; and if they could not have them directly from *England*, they would provide themselves elsewhere; which very much tended to the obstruction of the Sale of our Woollen-Manufactures, and the erecting of Woollen-Manufactures in Foreign Parts.

"Tis true, the *Hamburgh-Company* offer to admit any of His Majesty's Natural born Subjects into their Society, for such a Fine as shall be thought reasonable.

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But this we take to be an Ensnaring Invitation, for that no body can be admitted without taking an Oath to obey their By Laws, now made, or to be made; and all Persons have not Latitude enough to bind themselves by such an Oath; the *Company* not declaring what those By-Laws are, or shall be hereafter: Which By-Laws will appear to be made for the private Advantage of some few Merchants at *Hamburgh*, who arbitrarily make and alter them at pleasure. And a further Danger doth arise from the great Debts owing by that *Company*, to which every Person that shall be admitted will become liable.

From all these Considerations, 'tis humbly hoped, that the Wisdom of Parliament (as the only true Guardian of our Woollen-Manufactures) will not admit any thing to pass into an Act, to the so great prejudice of our Manufacture; but keep it at least in its present Freedom, if a further Encouragement shall not be thought Convenient.